

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJECT: PM REAFFIRMS ELECTIONS TO BE HELD IN 1977

REF: (A) COLOMBO A-74, (B) COLOMBO 668

1. SUMMARY: AT MEETING OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP) FEBRUARY 28, PM BANDARANAIKE ANNOUNCED THAT (1) SHE WOULD NOT BE A PARTY TO TOTALITARIANISM AND ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD ON SCHEDULE I.E., NO LATER THAN MAY 1977; (2) SHE WOULD NEVER AGAIN ALIGN SLFP WITH FORMER COALITION PARTNER LANKA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY (LSSP); AND (3) SLFP-AFFILIATED TRADE UNIONS WILL HENCE-FORTH TAKE ORDERS FROM PARTY AND MUST WITHDRAW FROM JOINT COUNCIL OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS (JCTUO). END SUMMARY.

2. IN POLICY ADDRESS TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF HER SLFP FEBRUARY 28, PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE IS REPORTED IN THE PRESS TO HAVE SAID THAT SRI LANKA ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD AS SCHEDULED NOT LATER THAN MAY 1977. SHE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THERE HAD BEEN ATTEMPTS TO PERSUADE HER NOT TO HOLD ELECTIONS BUT FPE WOULD NOT TAKE ANY ANTI-DEMOCRATIC STEP NOR

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WOULD SHE BE A PARTY TO TOTALITARIANISM. THESE ARE

HER FIRST COMMENTS ALONG THESE LINES SINCE IMPOSITION
OF EMERGENCY RULE IN INDIA.

3. STATEMENT CAME IN WAKE OF SEVERAL APPARENTLY
UNAUTHORIZED REMARKS BY SLFP M.P.'S INCLUDING
DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND LANDS H.M.
NAVARATNE, THAT ELECTIONS IN 1977 WERE NOT A CERTAINTY
AND, IN NAVARATNE'S WORDS, WOULD BE HELD WHEN
"PEOPLE WANTED THEM."

4. PM'S STATEMENT WAS REMINISCENT OF SIMILAR ONE
IN APRIL 1975 (REF AIRGRAM) WHEN SHE ALSO SILENCED
SPECULATION BY SOME IN HER PARTY THAT ELECTIONS
MIGHT NOT BE HELD BY AFFIRMING THAT HER GOVERNMENT
WOULD NOT STAY IN OFFICE BEYOND MAY 1977.

5. MOST RECENT DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY IN INDIA
AND SUBSEQUENT POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTION. POLITICAL
CIRCLES HERE HAVE SPECULATED WHETHER PM WOULD FIND
MRS. GANDHI'S ACTION A CONVENIENT PRECEDENT TO
INVOKE, THEREBY ENSURING HER (AND HER PARTY
MEMBERS') CONTINUANCE IN OFFICE.

6. IN SAME TALK TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, PM IS QUOTED
AS SAYING THAT SHE WOULD NEVER AGAIN ALIGN SLFP WITH
TROTSKYITE LSSP, ONE OF HER COALITION PARTNERS UNTIL
SEPTEMBER 1975. SHE HAS BEEN STUNG BY LSSP SPEARHEADING
OF OPPOSITION CAMPAIGN AGAINST HER AND ITS
CRITICISM OF MEASURES SHE CLAIMED THEY ADOPTED
JOINTLY.

7. IN APPARENT PIQUE AT SLFP UNION PARTICIPATION
IN TOKEN GENERAL STRIKE OF FEBRUARY 20 (REFTEL B)
PM ALSO MADE IT CLEAR TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE THAT
SLFP-AFFILIATED UNIONS MUST ACT ONLY UNDER PARTY
LEADERSHIP AND THAT THEY WITHDRAW FROM JCTUO,
LEFTIST-DOMINATED CONFEDERATION WHICH ORGANIZED
STRIKE.

8. SRI LANKA INDEPENDENT TRADE UNION FEDERATION
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(SLITUF), SLFP AFFILIATE, IS APPARENTLY RECONCILED
TO WITHDRAWAL FROM JCTUO IN ACCORDANCE WITH PM'S
DIRECTIVE. MEETING IS SCHEDULED MARCH 10 TO
DISCUSS WITHDRAWAL WITH MEMBERSHIP. SLITUF JOINT
SECRETARY ALAVI MOWLANA TOLD EMBOFF "WE WILL COMPLY
BUT COMPLAIN."
VAN HOLLEN

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